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AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
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ABSTRACT

Which words should students master in spelling? Language arts teachers can involve pupils in planning a list of words to learn to spell through a specific activity or experience, with sequentially planned lists aiding each learner to become a better speller. Pupil-teacher planning to determine scope and sequence in the spelling curriculum should include meeting the unique needs of each pupil, continuing learner involvement in word choices, and helping learners perceive relevance in what is being learned. Spelling words coming from diverse units of study in social studies, science, mathematics, and reading truly reflect correlation in the curriculum. Reputable textbooks are a valuable resource. Teaching spelling should include providing interesting and meaningful experiences for the learner. (CR)

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SCOPE IN THE SPELLING CURRICULUM

A relevant problem for educators to solve pertains to determining scope (breadth) in the spelling curriculum. Which words then should pupils master in spelling?

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Predetermined Word Lists

Numerous studies have been made of spelling words most frequently used by pupils in functional writing situations. For example, in the Fitzgerald Study, spelling words utilized by pupils most frequently on the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade levels were identified. If frequently used words are identified for learners to master, spelling errors can be greatly minimized in writing.

ED 396 250

Pupils may be pretested and then study the correct spelling of a reasonable number of new words at a given time, from Fitzgerald's Study[1] or other carefully controlled studies. A post-test should be given to notice if mastery learning has occurred. The test, study, test procedure in teaching spelling may be utilized again and again. It is important to assist pupils to pronounce correctly and attach meaning to each new word. Learners should also be able to use each new spelling word correctly in a sentence.

Studies of functional spelling words have been identified and predetermined for pupils to master. Hopefully, a variety of stimulating experiences may be provided to assist pupils in learning to spell words correctly selected from carefully designed research studies.

Advantages given by language arts specialists in using relevant spelling words identified in research studies might well be the following;

1. Scientific studies can be made of vital spelling words which all pupils should master to develop proficiency in writing.

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[1]James A. Fitzgerald, A Basic Life Vocabulary. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Bruce Publishing Company, 1951.

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2. Trivia spelling words can be weeded out of the curriculum when objectively determined lists are identified by researchers.
3. Useful spelling words for pupil mastery can be derived from carefully planned research studies.

One method, among others, in determining scope in the spelling curriculum pertains to studying and enumerating spelling words commonly used by a large number of pupils in functional writing experiences. The identified spelling words may then be mastered by pupils in the spelling curriculum.

Pupil-Teacher Planning

The involved pupil with teacher guidance may plan a list of words for the former to learn to spell. Spelling words selected are vital to master in a specific activity or experience. For example, if pupil A is wanting to write a friendly letter to a relative or friend in another city, selected spelling words are relevant to use in the writing experience. Among others, these words may be the following: present, birthday, party, friends, prizes, wrapping, theater, and favors. The number of words to master within a given interval of time needs to be reasonable and achievable. Each pupil with teacher guidance may then plan a specific set of words to master in the spelling curriculum. Sequential planned lists should aid each learner to become a better speller. The total number of words mastered in spelling represents the scope or breadth of the spelling curriculum. The order in achieving mastery of each set of spelling words pertains to determining sequence. For optimal achievement to occur, pupils need to experience sequential learnings.

Advantages given for emphasizing pupil-teacher planning in determining scope and sequence in spelling include the following:

1. Each pupil has unique needs to meet. Thus, a specific set of

spelling words needs to be in the offing for each learner.

2. The involved learner is in the best position to assist in determining which are functional spelling words to master.
3. Interest and purpose in learning may well come about when learners perceive relevance in terms of what is being learned.

Units of Study and the Spelling Curriculum

Spelling may be correlated with other curriculum areas in the school/class setting. For example, if pupils are studying a unit on "Plants and Animals," the following might become relevant spelling words for pupils to master: growth, seeds, reproduce, roots, leaves, vertebrates, and invertebrates. The number of words a pupil is to learn to spell depends upon his/her present achievement level. If pupil A can master the correct spelling of seven words in a five day cycle, the teacher has a gauge to use to measure learner progress. After correctly spelling seven words per week, the pupil may be challenged to increase the number of words to be spelled correctly within a week. Feelings of success might well motivate each pupil to achieve at a higher optimal level. Adequate provision needs to be made for slow, average, and fast achievers.

Words which pupils are to learn to spell correctly from ongoing units of study should be important and useful. Unimportant words should be omitted. Reasons given for emphasizing a correlated spelling curriculum include the following:

1. Knowledge perceived as being related is retained more adequately as compared to isolated items. Spelling words coming from diverse units of study in social studies, science, mathematics and reading truly reflects correlation in the curriculum.

2. Pupils may study selected concepts in depth if reading and spelling of each concept is emphasized in any resource unit. Depth study assists in retaining learnings longer as compared survey means of acquiring content.

The Spelling Textbook and the Learner

Reputable spelling textbooks are utilized in many classrooms in helping pupils to learn to spell words correctly. Inherent in these textbooks are lists of spelling words to master on a weekly basis for a given set of pupils. There also are diverse learning activities to help pupils learn to spell each word correctly in the list. The learning activities are varied to provide for individual differences.

Utilization of spelling textbooks is a rather traditional means in assisting pupils to learn to spell words correctly. Reputable textbooks have endured in space and time in the school curriculum.

Reasons given for using reputable textbooks in the spelling curriculum to provide scope include the following:

1. Writers of textbooks have spent much time and effort in determining objectives, learning activities, and evaluation procedures. They are specialists in their academic area of specialty and are in an excellent position to determine which words pupils should master in spelling.
2. Publishing companies have spent much money in developing and promoting their textbooks.
3. Textbook selection committees comprised of teachers, principals, and supervisors in schools have ample opportunities to evaluate each proposed book and make ultimate choices based on relevant criteria.
4. Research results provide input into developing lists of words, as

well as learning activities, in reputable spelling textbooks.

In Summary

Teachers, principals, and supervisors need to study, analyze, and adopt a justifiable approach in the teaching of spelling. Criteria used to justify the selection of a specific means of teaching spelling should include the following:

1. Experiences for pupils should be interesting and meaningful.
2. Learners should perceive purpose and achieve optimally in the spelling curriculum.